

Claims

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for communicating information between a first seller and
2 buyers in a negotiating room associated with an on-line group-buying sale having a first
3 featured item, comprising:

4 receiving the buyers in the negotiating room, wherein the negotiating room
5 provides support for communications about the on-line group-buying sale among the
6 buyers and the first seller;

7 receiving an initial price for the featured item from the first seller;

8 initiating the on-line group-buying sale for the first featured item after
9 receiving the initial price from the first seller;

10 transmitting communications from the buyers to the first seller via the
11 negotiating room, wherein at least some of the communications contain offers for the first
12 featured item;

13 producing a first flash demand curve for the first featured item using the
14 offers for the first featured item;

15 providing the first flash demand curve to the first seller; and

16 receiving a modified price for the first featured item from the first seller.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the on-line group-buying sale has a
2 second featured item associated with a second seller, the method further comprising:

3 receiving an initial price for the second featured item from the second
4 seller;

5 initiating the on-line group-buying sale for the second featured item after
6 receiving the initial price from the second seller;

transmitting communications from the buyers to the second seller via the negotiating room, wherein at least some of the communications contain offers for the second featured item;

producing a second flash demand curve for the second featured item using the offers for the second featured item and providing the second flash demand curve to the second seller; and

receiving a modified price for the second featured item from the second seller.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

receiving a communication from a buyer of the buyers that contains an offer for the first featured item; and

receiving a communication from the same buyer that contains an offer for the second featured item.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the first flash demand curve indicates that the buyer has also made an offer for the second featured item.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving an instruction from the first seller that modifies the featured item in the on-line group-buying sale to include at least one additional product/service.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the offers are revocable offers, the method further comprising:

transmitting a message to the buyers stating that subsequently received offers from the buyers will be treated as irrevocable; and

receiving further communications from the buyers, wherein at least some of the communications contain irrevocable offers.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving an instruction from the first seller to close the on-line group-
3 buying sale.

1 8. A method for determining demand for a featured item in an on-line
2 group-buying sale, comprising:

3 receiving buyers into a negotiating room, wherein the negotiating room
4 provides communication support between the buyers and a first seller of the featured
5 item;

6 conducting a first on-line group-buying sale, wherein the first on-line
7 group-buying sale is conducted in association with the buyers in the negotiating room;

8 producing at least one flash demand curve for the first featured item using
9 offers received from the buyers of the first on-line group-buying sale;

10 providing the at least one flash demand curve to the first seller, wherein the
11 first seller uses the at least one flash demand curve to create a sale demand curve for the
12 featured item; and

13 conducting a second on-line group-buying sale of the featured item using
14 the sale demand curve.

1 9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

2 conducting a third on-line group-buying sale, wherein the third on-line
3 group-buying sale is conducted in association with the buyers in the negotiating room;

4 producing at least another flash demand curve for the featured item using
5 offers received from the buyers of the third on-line group-buying sale; and

6 providing the at least another flash demand curve to the first seller, wherein
7 the first seller creates the sale demand curve for the featured item using the at least
8 another flash demand curve.

1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the seller modifies the first featured
2 item during the third on-line group-buying sale to include at least another
3 product/service, the method further comprising:

4 receiving from the seller an identification of products/services included in
5 the first featured item for the second on-line group-buying sale before conducting the
6 second on-line group-buying sale.

1 11. The method of claim 8 wherein the second on-line group-buying sale
2 begins before the first on-line group-buying sale using a current demand curve, the
3 method further comprising:

4 replacing the current demand curve for the featured item in the second on-
5 line group-buying sale with the sale demand curve.

1 12. The method of claim 8 wherein the first on-line group-buying sale
2 includes a second seller and a second featured item, the method further comprising:

3 providing at least one communication between the buyers and the second
4 seller to the first seller.

1 13. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

2 storing the at least one flash demand curve in a data repository.

1 14. A computer-implemented method for processing communications
2 between buyers and sellers in an on-line group-buying sale for a featured item,
3 comprising:

4 receiving filtering instructions for communications relating to the featured
5 item in the on-line group-buying sale;

6 setting a message receiver to process buyer communications in accordance

7 with the filtering instructions;

8 receiving buyer communications pertaining to the featured item during the
9 on-line group-buying sale; and

10 filtering the received buyer communications through the message receiver
11 in accordance with the filtering instructions.

1 15. The method of claim 14 wherein the filtering instructions pertain to
2 filtering the received buyer communications by at least one of a chat format, an
3 auditorium chat format, and a threaded message format.

1 16. The method of claim 14 wherein the filtering instructions direct the
2 message receiver to filter the received buyer communications according to a buyer format
3 request associated with at least one of the received buyer communications.

1 17. The method of claim 16 wherein the buyer format request is one of a
2 chat format, an auditorium chat format, and a threaded message format.

1 18. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
2 determining if the buyer format request is available; and
3 identifying another format if the buyer format request is not available.

1 19. The method of claim 14, further comprising:
2 determining if multiple communications formats are available after
3 receiving a buyer communication of the buyer communications; and
4 selecting a communications format of the multiple communications formats
5 for the received buyer communication using the filtering instructions if multiple
6 communications treatments are available.

1 20. A computer-implemented method for allowing buyers and at least
2 one seller to communicate about at least one featured item offered in an on-line group-
3 buying sale, comprising:

4 receiving a buyer communication from a buyer of the buyers regarding the
5 featured item;

6 transmitting the buyer communication to a seller representative associated
7 with the featured item, wherein the seller representative comprises a utility that permits
8 the at least one seller to communicate with the buyer;

9 receiving a response from the seller representative to the buyer
10 communication; and

11 transmitting the response to the buyer.

1 21. The method of claim 20 wherein transmitting the buyer
2 communication to the seller representative comprises translating the buyer
3 communication from a first communications format to a second communications format.

1 22. The method of claim 20 wherein transmitting the response to the
2 buyer comprises translating the response from a first communications format to a second
3 communications format.

1 23. The method of claim 22 wherein the second communications format
2 is one of a wireless communications format and a television communications format.

1 24. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 retaining at least a portion of the buyer communication in a data repository,
3 wherein the data repository is configured to allow review of the communication portion
4 by at least another buyer; and

5 retaining at least a portion of the seller representative's response in the data
 6 repository, wherein the data repository is configured to allow review of the
 7 communication portion by at least another buyer.

1 25. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
 2 transmitting instructions from the seller representative to an on-line group-
 3 buying mechanism hosting the on-line group-buying sale, wherein the instructions alter at
 4 least one characteristic of the featured item offered in the on-line group-buying sale.

1 26. A method for determining a flash demand curve for a featured item
 2 offered by a seller in an on-line group-buying sale, comprising:
 3 receiving an initial price for the featured item from the seller;
 4 initiating the on-line group-buying sale for the featured item after receiving
 5 the initial price from the seller;
 6 receiving offers for the featured item from buyers, wherein the received
 7 offers include prices equal to or less than the initial price;
 8 constructing the flash demand curve; and
 9 providing the flash demand curve to the seller.

1 27. The method of claim 26, further comprising:
 2 receiving a modified price for the first featured item from the seller after the
 3 flash demand curve has been provided to the seller;
 4 displaying the modified price to the buyers;
 5 receiving offers for the featured item from buyers, wherein the received
 6 offers include prices equal to or less than the modified price;
 7 constructing the new flash demand curve; and
 8 providing the new flash demand curve to the seller.

1 28. The method of claim 27, further comprising:
2 receiving an instruction to determine a new flash demand curve;

1 29. The method of claim 26 wherein the flash demand curve is
2 constructed by plotting received offers on a graph according to price and cumulative
3 number of offers received at or below each price

1 30. The method of claim 26, further comprising:
2 receiving an instruction to determine the flash demand curve after the
3 initiation of the on-line group-buying sale.

1 31. A method for allowing buyers and at least one seller to communicate
2 about at least one featured item offered in an on-line group-buying sale, comprising:
3 receiving a buyer communication regarding the featured item;
4 transmitting the buyer communication to a seller representative associated
5 with the featured item;
6 receiving a response from the seller representative to the buyer
7 communication;
8 retaining at least a portion of the buyer communication in a data repository,
9 wherein the data repository is configured to allow review of the communication portion
10 by at least another buyer;
11 retaining at least a portion of the seller representative response in the data
12 repository, wherein the data repository is configured to allow review of the
13 communication portion by at least another buyer;
14 transmitting instructions from the seller representative to an on-line group-
15 buying mechanism hosting the on-line group-buying sale, wherein the instructions alter a
16 price of the featured item offered in the on-line group-buying sale.

1 32. The method of claim 31 wherein the instructions transmitted to the
2 on-line group-buying mechanism additionally comprise at least one of a time interval for
3 when the on-line group-buying sale is available, a minimum or maximum quantity of the
4 at least one featured item, and a new price curve for the featured item.

1 33. The method of claim 31 wherein transmitting the buyer
2 communication comprises:
3 filtering the buyer communication using a message receiver.

1 34. The method of claim 33 wherein the message receiver filters the
2 buyer communication using at least one of a chat format, an auditorium chat format, a
3 threaded message/newsgroup chat format, and a message board format.

1 35. The method of claim 33, further comprising:
2 identifying a message receiver format to apply in transmitting the buyer
3 communication to the seller representative.

1 36. The method of claim 35 wherein the identified message receiver
2 format is at least one of a chat format, an auditorium chat format, a threaded
3 message/newsgroup chat format, and a message board format.

1 37. The method of claim 35 wherein the message receiver format
2 comprises a seller-selected preference.

1 38. The method of claim 37 wherein the seller-selected preferences
2 comprise thresholds pertaining to application of a message receiver format from set of
3 message receiver formats.

1 39. The method of claim 31 wherein receiving a response from the seller
2 representative comprises:

3 examining the buyer communication to determine if an automated
4 responder is suitable for replying to the buyer communication; and

5 sending the buyer communication to the automated responder if
6 examination of the buyer communication determines that the automated responder is
7 suitable for replying to the buyer communication.

1 40. The method of claim 31 wherein at least another featured item is
2 offered in the on-line group-buying sale by at least another seller, the method further
3 comprising:

4 transmitting the buyer communication to the at least another seller
5 representative.

1 41. A computer-implemented negotiating room system for
2 communicating information between sellers and buyers associated with an on-line group-
3 buying sale having a featured item, comprising:

4 a message receiver and transmitter configured to receive buyer
5 communications and send the buyer communications to the seller;

6 a seller representative configured to assist the seller in reviewing and
7 responding to buyer communications and further configured to send seller instructions to
8 an on-line group-buying mechanism hosting the on-line group-buying sale; and

9 an outgoing message transmitter configured to receive communications
10 from the seller and transmit the communications to the buyers.

1 42. The system of claim 41, further comprising:

2 an automated responder configured to review the buyer communications

3 and provide a response to at least one buyer communication, wherein the outgoing
4 message transmitter is further configured to send the response to at least one buyer.

1 43. The system of claim of claim 41 wherein the message receiver and
2 transmitter further comprises at least one of a chat enabler, an auditorium chat enabler, a
3 threaded message/newsgroup enabler, and a message board enabler.

1 44. The system of claim 43, further comprising:
2 a message receiver controller configured to send instructions to the message
3 receiver and transmitter to enable the at least one of the chat enabler, the auditorium chat
4 enabler, the threaded message/newsgroup enabler, and the message board enabler.

1 45. The system of claim 41, further comprising:
2 a data repository configured to retain at least one seller response to a buyer
3 communication.

1 46. The system of claim 41 wherein the seller representative is further
2 configured to receive a modified price for the featured item from the seller and send the
3 instruction to the on-line group-buying mechanism.

1 47. The system of claim 46 wherein the seller representative is further
2 configured to receive an instruction from the seller to close the on-line group-buying sale.

1 48. The system of claim 46 wherein the seller representative is further
2 configured to receive an instruction from the seller modifying the featured item in the on-
3 line group-buying sale, wherein modifying the featured item comprises adding at least
4 one of a product and a service to the featured item.

1 49. The system of claim 41 wherein the on-line group-buying sale has
2 another featured item associated with another seller and wherein the message receiver
3 and transmitter is further configured to receiver buyer communications for the another
4 seller.

1 50. A system for determining demand for a featured item offered in an
2 on-line group-buying sale by at least one seller, comprising:

3 an on-line group-buying mechanism configured to conduct the on-line
4 group-buying sale for the featured item;

5 a message receiver and transmitter configured to receive buyer
6 communications, wherein at least some of the buyer communications contain offers for
7 the featured item;

8 a voting mechanism configured to receive the offers from the message
9 receiver and transmitter and calculate a flash demand curve using the offers; and

10 an operator representative configured to provide the flash demand curve to
11 the at least one seller.

1 51. The system of claim 50, further comprising:

2 an outgoing message transmitter configured to send a message to at least
3 one buyer announcing the beginning of the on-line group-buying sale.

1 52. The system of claim 51 wherein the outgoing message transmitter is
2 configured to send the message over at least one of a wireless communications format
3 and a television communications format.

1 53. The system of claim 50 wherein the message receiver and
2 transmitter is configured to process buyer communications using at least one of a chat

3 format, an auditorium chat format, a threaded message/newsgroup format, and a message
4 board format.

1 54. The system of claim 50, further comprising:
2 an operator representative configured to announce the initiation of an
3 auditorium chat forum to the buyers over an electronic network.

1 55. The system of claim 53, wherein the electronic network is at least
2 one of a cable network, the Internet, and the public switched telephone network.

1 56. A system for selling featured items offered by a seller to buyers,
2 comprising:

3 a negotiating room configured to sell the featured items using an on-line
4 group-buying sale, wherein the negotiating room includes a voting mechanism
5 configured to calculate at least one flash demand curve for the featured items using offers
6 received from the buyers; and

7 an on-line group-buying mechanism configured to sell the featured items
8 using a sale demand curve developed from the at least one flash demand curve.

1 57. The system of claim 56 wherein the negotiating room further
2 comprises:

3 a message receiver and transmitter configured to receive buyer
4 communications, wherein at least some of the buyer communications contain offers for
5 the featured items.

1 58. The system of claim 56 wherein the on-line group-buying
2 mechanism begins selling the featured items using an initial demand curve before the on-
3 line group-buying sale in the negotiating room begins, the system further comprising:

4 a seller representative configured to send an instruction to the on-line
5 group-buying mechanism to replace the initial demand curve with the sale demand curve.

1 59. A system for filtering communications during negotiations between
2 buyers and a seller in an on-line group-buying sale for a featured item, comprising:

3 a message receiver controller configured to receive instructions from the
4 seller, wherein the instructions pertain to setting a message receiver and transmitter to
5 process buyer communications;

6 a message receiver and transmitter configured to receive buyer
7 communications pertaining to the featured item during the on-line group-buying sale; and

8 a seller representative configured to assist the seller in process received
9 buyer communications.

1 60. The system of claim 59 wherein the message receiver and
2 transmitter is configured to process received buyer communications by at least one of a
3 chat format, an auditorium chat format, and a threaded message format.

1 61. The system of claim 59 wherein the message receiver and
2 transmitter is configured to process the received buyer communications according to a
3 buyer format request associated with at least one of the received buyer communications.

1 62. The system of claim 61 wherein the buyer format request is one of a
2 chat format, an auditorium chat format, and a threaded message format.

1 63. The system of claim 61 wherein the message receiver and

transmitter is further configured to determine if the buyer format request is available and to identify another format if the buyer format request is not available.

64. The system of claim 59 wherein the message receiver controller is further configured to determine if multiple communications formats are available and to select a communications format of the multiple communications formats for the received buyer communication using filtering instructions if multiple communications formats are available.

65. The system of claim 59 wherein the message receiver transmitter is further configured to filter the buyer communication according a seller-selected preference and wherein the seller-selected preferences comprise thresholds pertaining to application of a message treatment format from set of message treatment formats.

66. A data processing system that provides communications between buyers and a first seller during an on-line group-buying sale for a first featured item, the data processing system including negotiating room software executable on the data processing system and configured to transmit communications from the buyers to the first seller, wherein at least some of the communications contain offers for the first featured item, the data processing system further configured to produce a first flash demand curve for the first featured item using the offers for the first featured item and configured to provide the first flash demand curve to the first seller.

67. The data processing system of claim 66 wherein the on-line group-buying sale has a second featured item associated with a second seller, the data processing system further configured to transmit communications from the buyers to the second seller, wherein at least some of the communications contain offers for the second featured item; the data processing system further configured to produce a second flash demand curve for the second featured item using the offers for the second featured item

7 and configured to provide the second flash demand curve to the second seller.

1 68. The data processing system of claim 66 wherein the data processing
2 system is further configured to receive a modified price for the first featured item from
3 the first seller.

1 69. The data processing system of claim 66 wherein the data processing
2 system is further configured to receive an instruction from the first seller that modifies
3 the first featured item in the on-line group-buying sale to include at least one additional
4 product/service.

1 70. A data processing system that determines demand for a featured item
2 during an on-line group-buying sale, the data processing system including negotiating
3 room software executable on the data processing system and configured to initiate a first
4 on-line group-buying sale, wherein the first on-line group-buying sale is conducted in
5 association with buyers and a seller, the data processing system further configured to
6 produce at least one flash demand curve for the featured item using offers received from
7 the buyers of the first on-line group-buying sale, configured to provide the at least one
8 flash demand curve to the seller, wherein the seller uses the at least one flash demand
9 curve to create a sale demand curve for the featured item, and configured to initiate a
10 second on-line group-buying sale of the featured item using the sale demand curve.

1 71. A computer-readable data transmission medium containing a data
2 structure comprising:

3 (a) a first portion that specifies a featured item in an on-line group-
4 buying sale;

5 (b) a second portion that specifies a communication about the featured
6 item;

(c) a third portion that identifies a buyer who prepared the communication;

(d) a fourth portion that identifies a seller to receive the communication; and

(e) a fifth portion that specifies a buyer-requested communications format for the communication.

72. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing a process for allowing buyers and at least one seller to communicate about a featured item offered in an on-line group-buying mechanism, comprising:

receiving a buyer communication from a buyer of the buyers regarding the featured item;

transmitting the buyer communication to a seller representative associated with the featured item, wherein the seller representative comprises a utility that permits the at least one seller to communicate to the buyer;

receiving a response from the seller representative to the buyer communication; and

transmitting the response to the buyer.

73. The computer-readable medium of claim 72 wherein transmitting the buyer communication to the seller representative comprises translating the buyer communication from a first communication format to a second communication format.

74. The computer-readable medium of claim 72 wherein transmitting the response to the buyer comprises translating the response from a first communication format to a second communication format.

1 75. The computer-readable medium of claim 72, further comprising:
2 retaining at least a portion of the buyer communication in a data repository,
3 wherein the data repository is configured to allow review of the portion of the buyer
4 communication by at least another buyer; and

5 retaining at least a portion of the seller representative response in the data
6 repository, wherein the data repository is configured to permit review of the portion of
7 the seller communication by at least another buyer.

1 76. The computer-readable medium of claim 72, further comprising:
2 transmitting instructions from the seller representative to an on-line group-
3 buying mechanism hosting the on-line group-buying sale, wherein the instructions alter at
4 least one characteristic of the featured item offering in the on-line group-buying sale.

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